

AZ State Official Visitors Guide

Park it in Arizona

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT

For the best sample of the Sonoran Desert, visit this "least visited" of the desert parks. Here you will find a variety of cactus like no other in the USA. Organ pipe grows only here and is "second only to the mighty saguaro" in stature. Of course the Sonoran Desert is more than just cactus. You will discover the great variety of plants that make the Sonoran Desert a showcase. Here you will also find typical Basin-and-Range topography of isolated mountain ranges separated by wide, shallow valleys. The Ajo Mountains are spectacular for their colorful alternating bands of dark lava and cream colored volcanic tuff. A variety of typical desert animals inhabit an equal variety of desert landscapes ranging from low valleys to mountain tops at 4800 ft. Activities include scenic driving, hiking, camping, photography, birding and wildlife watching.

The approach: from Tucson go west on AZ Hwy #86. At Why, turn left onto AZ Hwy #85. Go south until you come to the Kris Eggle Visitor Center at mile 75.2. From Phoenix, Take I-10 west to AZ State #85. Travel south, going through Gila Bend, and continue again on AZ Hwy #85 until you come to the Kris Eggle Visitor Center. Allow 3 hours travel time from either Tucson or Phoenix.

Visitor Center Tips: Park rangers will help plan your visit and make suggestions to get the most value for your time. Allow at least 3 hours to visit the monument. Watch our 15 minute video, then take the Ajo Mountain Scenic Drive (2 hrs round trip), or go exploring.

Best Bang for your buck morning hike: Desert View Nature Trail (1.2 mile loop), showcases a variety of Sonoran Desert vegetation including large specimens of organ pipe cactus. For the more adventurous and physically fit, hike the strenuous 4.2 mile round trip up to Bull Pasture, then return via Estes Canyon.

Lunch to remember: Pack your own delicious picnic and enjoy it at one of our many picnic areas or at a favorite trailside rest stop.

Offbeat Activity: Birdwatchers and history buffs love Alamo Canyon. It's an easy 2 mile round trip in a desert riparian canyon. After heavy winter rains or summer monsoon downpours the sound of trickling water may be irresistible for birds, wildlife and hikers, too.

Perfect spot to watch the Sunset: The picnic area at the end of Puerto Blanco Drive provides expansive shadows to match the expansive views of the Valley of the Ajo and the Ajo Mountains.

If You Have More Time: Come camping with us and hike our many trails. Join the ranger programs offered mid-December through mid-April.